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NEWS RELEASE

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Moscow Means Music
by Senator Larry Craig

Chicago. New York. New Orleans. When jazz enthusiasts talk about the hot spots for this American art form, these are usually the cities first to be mentioned. As time goes on, however, Moscow, Idaho is making its way into that conversation, too.

You read that right – Moscow. For four days every February, in the dead of winter on the Palouse, students, jazz fans and world-class jazz musicians gather at the University of Idaho's Lionel Hampton International Jazz Festival. It is an experience that is as unique as it is unlikely.

More than 40 years after it began, who would have thought that the Lionel Hampton International Jazz Festival would become what it is today? Its first year, in 1967 (way back when I was a student at the U of I), the festival ran just one day, had 15 student groups, and one concert. Today, festival planners routinely expect student groups from more than 300 schools, and the event includes seven concerts over the span of four days. Tens of thousands arrive on the U of I campus every year, traveling from the far corners of the globe.

Many have wondered what has made the festival such a success. Without question, many, many people – including Lionel Hampton himself, Dr. Lynn Skinner, and John Clayton, to name a few – have put in phenomenal efforts to make the festival successful. But the special ingredient, cherished by jazz students and musicians alike, has been the workshops, where some of the best musicians in the world get to share their experiences and tricks of the trade with those eager to learn. Guitarist Herb Ellis said this feature makes the festival unique, in that it allows those who come to perform a chance to share, teach, and interact directly with young students.

That is why the festival became such a success, and is why so many legends like Hampton, Ray Brown, Ella Fitzgerald and Dizzy Gillespie were willing to come to what probably seemed like such an out-of-the-way place. Dr. Skinner also used the festival as a platform to launch the Jazz in the Schools program, extending the opportunity to learn about jazz to children in small towns all across the Northwest.

For preserving jazz and simultaneously bringing it to thousands of young musicians, the University of Idaho was recently honored by President Bush and the National Endowment for the Arts. Suzanne and I were proud to be in attendance at the White House, as U of I President Dr. Timothy

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White and John Clayton were presented with the National Medal of Arts, honoring the university's role in carrying on this truly American art form.

The National Medal of Arts is described as the highest honor the nation can bestow on an artist or institution, and the University of Idaho is the first public university ever to receive it.

Such an honor is clearly a reflection of the excellent and tireless work of the U of I and all involved with the festival. But all of Idaho can be proud to share in this success. It is a reflection on our great State as well. Congratulations!